

Senate vote on confirmation of the Abruzzo nomination; that the cloture vote on the Jenkins nomination occur immediately upon disposition of the Abruzzo nomination; that if cloture is invoked on the Jenkins nomination, all postcloture time expire at 2:30 p.m.; finally, that if any of the nominations are confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Madam President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order following the remarks of Senator RUBIO.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Florida.

#### CUBA

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, we have heard more about Cuba in the last week than probably the 10 years that I have been here combined.

And yesterday we heard from the White House. The White House was having some sort of a meeting and conference call and came out and said that they are going to be looking at remittances and increasing and making it easier to get money to relatives in Cuba.

That is not surprising. The people in charge of Cuba policy at the White House, at the National Security Council, and at the State Department—the people in charge of Cuba policy have long been advocates for dialogue with the regime and an economic opening to the regime. They have been for getting rid of the embargo and that sort of thing.

I think it is important, given the fact that I recognize that most people in this country and in the Senate don't follow this issue on a regular basis, that we address that. Because the fundamental question being put to us is—so the people of Cuba are suffering. The people of Cuba are going through a difficult economic time. I would argue that they have done so for 62 years—why don't we get rid of the embargo? It would make life easier for them.

And I want to address it. I want to address it especially to those who are not as familiar with this issue.

First of all, let me begin by saying there are no American ships blockading Cuba, surrounding the island of Cuba. In fact, Cuba, frankly, does not have an embargo in the way people think.

Cuba trades with the whole world. For example, Cuba, every year, exports \$1.2 billion, which doesn't sound like a lot, but it is a lot for an island of 11 million people. OK?

They export \$461 million to China; \$127 million to Spain; \$65 million to the

Netherlands; \$64 million to Germany. This is not a country that is isolated. They trade with every country in the world.

They import \$5.3 billion a year. With Spain alone, they export—they import, I am sorry, \$1 billion from Spain; another \$790 million from China; \$327 million from Italy; \$285 million from Canada and from Russia.

So they import 5—over \$5 billion. They export over \$1.2 billion. Cuba is not isolated. They trade with every country—this regime trades with virtually every country on the planet.

You know who else they trade with? The United States of America. Cuba trades with the United States of America. They import almost \$280 million a year; almost as much as they do with Canada and Russia. And no one accuses Canada and Russia of having a blockade on Cuba.

Sixty-six percent of the chicken that is eaten in Cuba, which is the staple protein in Cuba, comes from the United States. Half their soybeans come from the United States.

There is only one blockade in Cuba, and it is the blockade that this regime has imposed upon its people.

Now, yesterday, the President announced—or the White House announced they are going to stand up some remittances group to try to figure out: So how do we make it easier for relatives to send money to their relatives on the island of Cuba?

Well, that work group is going to not have a long time to meet. They are not going to have to meet for very long because U.S. law allows that now. It is not illegal to send money to your relatives in Cuba.

The only thing that is prohibited is you can't send the money—you can't send the money through this bank that the Cuban military set up in Panama. That is the only thing that is prohibited.

And to the extent money can't reach the people of Cuba, it is because they refuse to allow anyone other than that bank to do these remittances.

And, by the way, they have prohibited depositing dollars. Here is how it works for them: You send your relative \$100. They take 10 percent of it. Then they take the dollars—they don't let them deposit it. They pocket the dollars, and they give them this worthless Cuban currency. So they have the dollars so they can buy things for themselves and on the global market.

So the blockade, to the extent that there is something that is preventing remittances directly to the Cuban people, it is not U.S. policy; it is regime policy. They are the ones who need a work group.

How about this argument that there is a blockade on travel? If only more American tourists could go to Cuba.

By the way, Cuba is already filled with Canadian tourists and Italian tourists who enjoy 5-star accommodations. And I will be frank, many of them go there—these sick, disgusting

men who go there to hook up with a 16- or 17-year-old girl.

But that said, they talk about travel to Cuba. Well, let me tell you something. Travel is allowed now. An American can go to Cuba. You just can't stay at a military-owned hotel or eat at a military-owned restaurant or shop at a military-owned store. You can stay at the private homes of people who rent them out on Airbnb. You can do that. You can eat at a restaurant that is owned by a private person. You can shop at stores that are owned by private people.

The reason why they have nowhere to stay, nowhere to eat, and nowhere to shop is not U.S. policy. It is that the Cuban regime won't allow privately owned hotels, privately owned shops, privately owned stores. They won't allow it—privately owned restaurants. They are the ones who have a blockade on travel, not the United States.

What about medicine? That is another thing they have put out there. This is so cruel. We don't allow medicine in.

Do you know what the Cuban regime announced last week? This is what they announced on their national television: We are going to lift the ban on the importation of medicine.

What? You mean there was a Cuban ban, a regime ban on importing medicine? Yes, there was. They are the ones who weren't allowing medicine in. And to the extent they were allowing it in, they were putting a tariff on it. So there is no blockade on medicine. We sell them medicine.

And you can donate medicine, unlimited amounts, under U.S. law. If there is a blockade on medicine, it is the regime's blockade.

The other one I hear is the internet. I support the internet. Why don't we allow—I had somebody say this to me yesterday: Why don't we allow American companies to go and provide internet, then they would have internet? It is the embargo.

And these people don't know what they are talking about. They literally are just parroting stupid, ridiculous talking points, because the law in the U.S. on trade with Cuba specifically exempts telecoms. AT&T, Verizon, Sprint, every American telecom could go into Cuba tomorrow and offer phone and internet service.

You know why they can't? Not our law. It is the Cuban regime because they want to control that.

And you see a pattern here. Blockade on travel, blockade on private ownership of business, blockade on bringing in medicine, blockade on bringing in money. Why?

Because the Cuban regime wants to control people. They don't want an individual Cuban to have a paycheck that they earn for themselves. They want what little you have to come from them because if you don't do what they tell you, they can take it from you. That is what they want.

They don't want you to have internet companies offered by AT&T and Sprint